Effects of Employees' Perception of Organizational Injustice on Commitment to Work among Staff of Lagos State Fire Service

Emmanuel E. Etim[1*] and Gbolabo O. Okudero[2]

[1]*Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Lagos, Nigeria.*
[2]*Department of Human Resources and Industrial Relations, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Human resources managers have attempted, at different points, to figure out ways to prevent the perception of organizational injustice among employees. The perception of injustice has been found to be one of the most influential factors that affect commitment in the workplace. This study examines the effects of employees' perception of injustice on commitment to work among staff of Lagos State Fire Service. The survey research design was utilized, through the administration of the questionnaire, for the collection of factual data that are measurable and quantifiable. Equity and Social exchange theories were applied to aid proper understanding of this phenomenon. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that perceived distributive, procedural, as well as interpersonal injustices, affect employees' commitment to work as exhibited among Fire Fighters in Lagos State. It was recommended that managers should ensure that employees perceive justice and fairness as they discharge their duties in the organization. They should introduce reward determination processes and practices,

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Corresponding author: Email: emmaetim1@gmail.com;

performance evaluation as well as employee-manager relationship. Findings of this research will contribute to knowledge on the drivers of employees' commitment to work and sustainable employer-employee relations.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Organizational justice, as a concept, has been operationalized in social and management sciences to depict a scenario where workers are treated without bias by the management. It is often seen as the individual's perception of fairness in actions taken by the management both internally and externally which ascertains morality in accordance with basic norms, ethics, or laws across diverse contexts and culture [1]. Epistemologically, organizational justice is traceable to France, in 1964, where it was adopted to describe employees' perception of transparency in the work place [2]. In the course of time, the concept has metamorphosed through various developmental stages. Prior to this, it was distributive justice that was identified, followed by procedural justice and interactional justice. However, by late 2012, informational justice was identified as part of interactional justice [3].

From the works of Cropanzano, Bowen and Gilliland [4], organizational justice is a situation where employees perceive equity and justice in the system. This is capable of boosting productivity because an enabling work environment is believed to have been created; an environment or system where the individual concerns of the employee is also cherished, as against a system where they (employees) are not allowed to make contributions in decisions, including those affecting them. Belongingness in itself has positive effects on supervisors and supervisees as it is between the government and the masses [5]. It has been observed that where efforts to attain success becomes threatening, demoralizing and dampening, it becomes imperative for managers to develop techniques, strategies for goal actualization [6]. It is pertinent to delineate that fairness and justice at work place are inevitable [7]. It is worthy of note that this, as a matter of importance, cuts across the various routes of communication in the work place including task allocation or rewards, benefits appropriation as well as social interaction between supervisors and workers. No matter the circumstance and at every point in time, justice must be ensured [8]. Further,

Greenberg [9] noted that when rewards are to be shared, consistent and unbiased procedures must be followed. Also, there should be respectful interpersonal interaction between supervisors and workers [10]. Management should strengthen those structures that are necessary in enhancing workers' perception of fairness in the workplace.

Organizational commitment, on the other hand, is the demonstration of loyalty and willingness to serve in a given capacity in an organization [11]. Employees who are committed to the organization are always devoted to their jobs, they accept responsibilities, and invest their time and efforts to ensure that the organization achieves it goals [12]. Organizational commitment, in a nutshell, connotes employees' involvement in the organization [13,14]. The understanding of employees' perception of justice with respect to commitment to work would go a long way in helping human resources managers to develop appropriate compensation schemes as well as the know-how to run their respective organizations, whether public or private. Owners of capital or human resources practitioners who desire to achieve the overall objectives of the organization would agree with the fact that employees are and will remain the most valuable assets an organization has; hence, they must be treated with all amounts of fairness and dignity. In this regards therefore, the study seeks to investigate and recommend solutions to employees' perception of injustice which affects their commitment to work in the organization. It will consider distributive, procedural, and interpersonal justices and their impacts to commitment in Lagos State Fire Service.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

i) To investigate the extent to which distributive justice influences employees' commitment to work in Lagos State Fire Service.
ii) To investigate employees' perception of procedural justice and its effect on commitment to work in Lagos State Fire Service.

iii) To examine the effect of interactional justice perception on the commitment to work in Lagos State Fire Service.

1.2 Hypotheses

Ho1: Perceived distributive injustice will affect employees' commitment to work in Lagos State Fire Service.

Ho2: Employees who perceive more procedural injustice would be less committed to work in Lagos State Fire Service.

Ho3: The more the perceived interactional injustice among employees, the lesser their commitment to work in Lagos State Fire Service.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE DEFINED

There are several attempts to explicate the concept organizational justice. The scope of organizational justice is only limited by one's imagination. It is the extent to which employees perceive the treatment given to them in the work place. Organizational justice as a concept goes as far as examining whether or not these treatments are fair enough with respect to the outcome which the employee receives from the organization. No worker wants to be treated unfairly by managers or supervisors [15]; at such, it beacons on managers and supervisors to carefully check and ensure the employees that are working under them do not perceive any form of poor treatment, as this may affect their commitment to the organization. Formerly, distributive, procedural and interactional justice where identified as dimensions of organizational justice. However, further studies have added interpersonal justice to the list [16]. Interactional justice was further divided into informational justice and interpersonal justice.

2.1 Basic Dimensions of Organizational Justice

2.1.1 Distributive justice

Distributive justice has to do with perceived even-handedness in terms of granting monetary and other rewards to an employee who has invested quality time and service in the work place. Distributive justice appears first in among the dimensions of organizational justice. In the views of Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen; Ramamoorthy & Flood; Alder & Ambrose; and Greenberg; [17,18,19,9] workers perceive this dimension of justice by determining whether the rewards they receive is commensurate with the effort or the input they make. At this point, we can make reference to the equity theory which explains how people make conscious efforts to match the ratio of their input to what they gain from the organization as well as comparing it with what their counterparts in other establishments get. More, if the outputs (rewards) meet their expectations, as compared to their counterparts. Therefore, it can be deduced from the aforementioned that unequal pay package or bonus issued to staff of the same level will be perceived as injustice on the staff who earns less.

2.1.2 Procedural justice

According to Syed, employees judge the fairness of procedures by the following. First, process control; how far they can make decisions about outcomes [3]. Second, decisions control; their influence over the decision. This dimension of justice comes to play during the analysis (or decision-making process) regarding outcomes and rewards. It is no news that employees would like to participate when decisions are being made, especially if the decisions are related to, or affects them directly. Employees who perceive procedural justice believes that the employers' or managerial decisions are legitimate Tallman, Phipps, & Matheson [20]. This belief of legitimacy gives employees more reasons to be committed to the organization.

2.1.3 Interactional justice

Another dimension of justice is the interactive justice. Interactional justice is a subcategory of interpersonal justice. It considers employees perceived fairness about the level of interpersonal relationship and treatment that is applied during procedures in the organization. Here, attention is paid to what is termed as 'truth', as well as the need for mutual understanding (Fortin, 2008). In like manner, it is normal for an employee to perceive some treatments in the organization as unfair, even though these treatments are actually not to his detriment. Fair interactions can improve employees' attitude and conduct in an organization [21]. Interactional justice, as was identified earlier, includes informational justice; informational justice has to do with the quality and quantity of information at the disposal of employees during reward decisions, courtesy of their employers or supervisor [22]. It is very

important that the information provided to employees during this all important session must be sincere, adequate and clear [23]. The aforementioned features explain informational justice and justify manager's decisions [17]. Further, employees are more satisfied when they realize that honesty, politeness and respect are intrinsic in these processes.

2.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

This study adopts two theories to explain the impacts of organizational justice on employees' commitment to work in the organization. The theories adopted are equity and social exchange theories. The former was propounded by Adams in the 60s to explain employees' satisfaction, especially when they compare their earnings with that of their counterparts (especially those in the same level) in other organizations. In the view of Adams, employees often seek to either maintain a balance or have a comparative advantage whenever they compare their input with what they receive or their earnings [24,25]. The theory explains further the level of de-moralization felt by employees when treated unfairly as compared to their counterparts in other organizations or workplace. Here, employees compare his input/output ratio with his contemporaries. According to Huseman, Hatfield, and Miles [26], four propositions capture the objectives of the theory: First, individuals evaluate the ratio of their outcomes from what they input into the organization, as compared to what is obtained by others; Second, if the comparison is negative, then inequality exists; Third, the more the inequality, the more the feeling of distress; and fourth, this may further degenerate into a cognitive distortion of input or possibly a termination of relationship.

While the latter is spotted in the work of Malinowski [27], who noted that social exchange is among the most significant theoretical patterns that are used for the understanding of workplace behaviour. The social exchange theory explains how employees behave when they perceive injustice in the organization. These behaviours are determined by the level of injustice perceived. The social exchange theory points to some exchange principles as key determinants of commitment in human relationship. The most influential among these principles is reciprocity, which is central to justice principle and explains employees' actions and behaviours when they feel that there is a misbalance or unfairness in the exchange [28].

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts the survey research design. Questionnaires were administered by the researcher during a day sensitization programme organized for fight for fire fighters in Lagos State on the topic: "Combating fire disaster" held on Monday 26th June, 2017. Lagos State Fire Service has a total number of Five Hundred and Seven (507) fire fighters. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered out of which Three Hundred and Six (306) were duly filled and returned. The population consists of people from varying age brackets, educational level and sex (26.6% Women). This is summarized in Table 1. Chi-square was used for data analysis and the research hypotheses formulated in this study were tested at the 0.05 degree of statistical significance.

4. RESULTS

Ho 1: The extent to which distributive justice is perceived by employees will influence their commitment to work.

The analysis on Table 1 shows that 72 respondents representing 23.5% of the distribution strongly agreed to the view that their compensation level does not reflect what they contribute to the organization; 146 respondents representing 47.7% agreed; 56 representing 18.3% were undecided; while 22 respondents

Table 1. Chi-square (X^2) distribution table

Response	O	E	o-e	$(o-e)^2$	$(o-e)^2 / E$
SA	72	61.2	10.8	116.64	1.91
A	146	61.2	84.8	7191.04	117.5
U	56	61.2	-5.2	27.04	0.44
SD	22	61.2	-39.2	1536.64	25.12
D	10	61.2	-51.2	2621.44	42.8
Total	306	306	0	11492.8	X^2 = 187.77

Level of significance = 0.05; df = 61.2; Cal –X^2 = 187.77; Tab –X^2 = 80.232
Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2017)

Table 2. Chi-square (X^2) distribution table

Response	O	E	o-e	$(o-e)^2$	$(o-e)^2 / E$
SA	160	61.2	98.8	9761.44	159.5
A	48	61.2	-13.2	174.24	2.85
U	36	61.2	-25.2	635.04	10.38
SD	20	61.2	-41.2	1697.44	27.7
D	42	61.2	-19.2	368.64	6.02
Total	306	306	0	12636.8	X^2 = 206.45

Level of significance = 0.05; df = 61.2; Cal –X^2 = 206.45; Tab –X^2 = 80.232
Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2017)

Table 3. Chi-square (X^2) distribution table

Response	O	E	o-e	$(o-e)^2$	$(o-e)^2 / E$
SA	60	61.2	-1.2	1.44	0.02
A	138	61.2	76.8	5895.24	96.37
U	48	61.2	-13.2	174.24	2.85
SD	26	61.2	-35.2	1239.04	20.25
D	34	61.2	-27.2	739.84	12.1
Total	306	306	0	8052.8	X^2 = 131.59

Level of significance = 0.05; df = 61.2; Cal –X^2 = 131.59; Tab –X^2 = 80.232
Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2017)

representing 7.2% of the distribution strongly disagreed and 10 respondents representing 3.3% disagreed.

Ho 2: Employees who perceive more procedural injustice would be less committed to work.

The analysis on Table 2 shows that 160 respondents representing 52.3% of the distribution strongly agreed to the view that they cannot express their feeling during those procedures in the organization; 48 respondents representing 15.7% agreed; 36 representing 11.8% were undecided; while 20 respondents representing 6.5% of the distribution strongly disagreed and 42 respondents representing 13.7% disagreed.

Ho 3: The more the perception of interactional injustice among employees, the lesser their commitment to work.

The analysis on Table 3 shows that 60 respondents representing 19.6% of the distribution strongly agreed; 138 respondents representing 45.1% agreed; 48 respondents representing 15.7% were undecided; while 26 respondents representing 8.5% of the distribution strongly disagreed and 34 respondents representing 11.1% disagreed.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the course of this study, the researcher subjected the three (3) hypotheses stated earlier to testing and analysis using the Chi-square (X^2) distribution. After the presentation and analysis of data and the test of hypotheses, the following findings, which will be discussed below emerged to support some already existing positions regarding the perception of organizational justice, as it affects employees' commitment to work. As Coffman and Gonzalez [6] noted, when the efforts to achieve success are threatened by discouraging conditions of work, there is a declining commitment to work by employees; hence, it becomes pertinent for managers to introduce innovative approaches and new strategies for winning this competition. Other findings in this study revealed the following;

First, perceived distributive injustice will affect employees' commitment to work. This lends credence to the findings of Tallman, et al. [20], who observed that "resource allocation is important for physicians to be able to deliver healthcare services and accomplish their goals. Although physicians do not determine how and where resources are allocated, they may be able to influence distribution of resources through

participation in decision making processes". The same applies to every other employee, irrespective of the nature of work; an employee should participate in the decision making.

Second, procedural injustice affects employees' commitment to work. According to Tallman, et al. [20], the belief of legitimacy gives employees more reasons to be committed to the organization. This is in sharp contrast with what is obtainable when they feel powerless and isolated.

Third, perceived interactional injustice has severe negative impact on employees' commitment to work. Here, when employees perceive alienation, they feel dehumanized and used as objects instead of influential agents that are capable of fulfilling themselves at work, while contributing to the overall achievement of organizational goals. When workers perceive that they have become victims of alienation, they tend to pay more attention to external rewards than putting up high performances. Many workers in this category are likely to quit their jobs [29,30,31]. Informational justice, as part of social exchange framework, enhances a smooth relationship between the worker and the organization, whereas, the feeling of belittlement often demotivates the worker.

6. CONCLUSION

The thrust of this study was to examine the influence of perceived organizational injustice on employees' commitment to work in Lagos State Fire Service. It has been observed that perceived injustice discourages smooth relationship between employees and managers or supervisors, as every employee desires an environment where he is wanted and his contributions are appreciated. The effect of such atmosphere on employee commitment to work cannot be over-emphasized. This is the situation that makes employees get more committed, internalized organizational goals and in many cases, sacrifice their time in a bid to achieve organizational objectives. Managers are saddled with the responsibility of putting forward some new strategies for winning, especially when the competition for achieving success is discouraging.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that organizations should make provisions for structures that will encourage robust interaction between employees and managers. Also, procedural, distributive as well as interactional justice should be watchwords in the management of every organization. Further, the use of uniform and transparent compensation structure should be in place, together with a participatory management system.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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